

“I get to live”

By

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August 15, 1945, 3:45 AM, aboard the USS Gen. George M Randall just east of Okinawa, 30 days at sea, radio silence is observed. Jack exits his bunk before the bell sounds. He beats the line to the head, climbs the stairs and finds a seat in the bow to patiently await for the pending dawn to see if he lives another day. Laden with life vest in brutal heat, he watches over 5000 men crowd their way onto the deck, most will stand for hours. They crowd in the darkness, as a sliver of light appears in the eastern sky, it is the time of beauty for poets; it is the time of death for a troop transport. The Japanese submarines use the sheen of the rising Sun to mask their deadly torpedo attacks. 5,142 men massed on the deck of a rolling ship, ready to leap to save themselves if the ship goes down. As the sun rises, it is 5:00 AM in Tokyo, the early morning radio announcer, Morio Tateno, stares down the barrel of a renegade officer's gun. Hirohito is under guard, a prisoner in his own palace, phone lines cut, throngs of soldiers ripping through his ministry looking to destroy his surrender recording to change the course of history. It is 4:00 PM the day before in Washington as President Truman prepares for his 18th, and most important, evening news conference. The Swiss have called, a cable will arrive shortly with long anticipated news. The sun has risen and the lookouts call clear. There is no enemy sub below the rising sun today. Jack Fuller does not worry about seeing his 19th birthday, Jack Fuller prays to see another sunrise. Radio silence, he knows little of the events that will dictate his future. Men who will never meet; simultaneous moments in time. Millions of lives rest on the actions of one, all on a single early morning in August, 1945.

Their collision course begins December 25, 1926. Christmas brought a special gift to the Fuller family, a happy, bouncy, noisy little boy they named Jack. It is

doubtful that anyone in the Fuller family would notice the small news article from the East that Herohito had become the 124th emperor of Japan on that Christmas Day. Morio Tateno studies hard with the dream of one day being part of a new and amazing media, the radio. He dreams of having a good wife and children in his future. Judge Harry Truman bounces his 22-month old daughter Mary-Margaret on his knee, elated to celebrate Christmas as a newly elected judge and no longer an Auto Club membership salesman.

Like so many boys of his era, Jack did not grow up in the abundance of his parents dream. In the depths of the depression, Jack learned to make his own way, his own fun and his own future. The 25 cents for the metal toy instead fed his cousins. As we rolled into the 1940s, Jack entered high school as a self-described “silly man”. He knew what his future held, they all did, chase girls not books, much more fun, he knew what was coming. Now Senator Truman holds off a very close challenge to his senate seat to remain in elected office. The mild mannered Hirohito accepts the advice from the military and an order is given. Morio Tateno has earned his place at the Japanese Broadcast Corporation, his morning weather broadcast from Tokyo at 3:00 AM on December 8, 1941 includes the coded phrase “East Wind Rain”. At that same instant, it is 8:00 AM, December 7th, Japanese Agents in Honolulu knew the war had begun, they received their coded message and then they saw it with their eyes. The collision course is set, war had begun and millions would die.

Christmas, 1944 brought high school dropout Jack to his 18th birthday and his order to report for induction. Later that spring off he went on the bus in his best traveling cloths and cheap suitcase. The US Marine Corps send him to Parris Island for basic training then on to Camp Lejeune North Carolina to prepare them for combat. Their suitcases, their clothes, everything but their wallets is tagged and sent home. Their heads were shaved, naked they stand in line and got their new shirts, new pants, new socks, new underwear and the canvas bag that was going to be there home. One steel bucket with their toiletries and sewing kit cost Jack \$25, \$4 dollars more than he made in a month. Jack was now a number. Jack will be taught to kill. For 10 weeks this silly young man was transformed into

a serious, useful warrior ready to die for one another, ready to die for their country, ready to kill. Jack's new hand to hand combat trainer was the actor, Johnny Weissmuller, of Tarzan fame. Jack thought it might mean a break and get an autograph. No break, Weissmuller taught Jack how to beat a man to death with a club. Jack marched and drilled and marched. He saw the African-American Marines practicing their bayonet drills over and over and over again. They all learned to put a bayonet through a man without hesitation, without thought, without fear. They are trained to kill. Europe would be finished soon. They knew what awaited them. Hand to hand combat day after day, two extra weeks of hand to hand combat; they would take Japan. Morio Tatenō's words "East Wind Rain" broadcast years ago are now bringing death, ruin and starvation to his homeland of Japan. Hirohito worries about the suffering of his people, President Truman wants American deaths to end. The war drags on. War has its own momentum, it seemed so easy to start, it is so damn hard to stop.

Silly high school dropout Jack is no more; the road to hell is through Tokyo. Jack awaits his orders to fight, kill and die with his fellow Marines.

Jack, **one tiny speck** in a giant plan, "Operation Downfall", the Allies will muster one and a half million men, 42 aircraft carriers, 24 battleships, and over 400 destroyers and destroyer escorts to escort 14 divisions to start invasion of mainland Japan. November 1st, 1945 is the target date. The operation can be no secret. Japan had very few beaches, they knew exactly where to defend. Casualty estimates were high; 500,000 Purple Heart medals were minted with options to order more – half a million more.

July 16, 1945, 7:30 AM, Eastern War Time, Jack's orders come, he boards the USS Gen. George M Randall. 5,142 men streaming into one small ship. You followed the man in front, you felt the breath from the man behind, you weaved your way through the maze of hatches and companionways until you reached your assigned bunk. Stretched canvas 2 feet by six feet, five high and two wide. Equipment and duffel bags everywhere, you always climbed over something. The

smell of men was thick; sweat and a strong hint of the foulness to come, below the water line there would be no fresh air. Security required the destination be secret, but there was only one, everyone knew and most would never return. As Jack surveys his tiny space to call home for the next month, it is 8:30 PM in Tokyo. Morio sleeps, he has learned to sleep through the air-raid sirens. His family quiet not to disturb him. He will be ready for his early morning weather and news reports. Hirohito sips tea, while reading in his palace. It is 5:30 AM in New Mexico, the best kept secret on the planet is in countdown. "Operation Trinity", the test of the first nuclear bomb is moved up to the soonest date possible. Truman wants to know what hand he has to play in Europe with Stalin and Churchill. The button is pressed, the blast is felt 100 miles away, the mushroom cloud is 7 ½ miles high, the light is brighter than day, the desert melts. The appropriate cover story is released to the public. Truman, aboard the USS Augusta, approaches the coast of Holland for the Berlin Conference. He eagerly awaits a message from New Mexico; it is success, and there are more bombs at his disposal.

With the confidence of our new secret weapon, on July 26th, the "Potsdam Declaration" is issued that gave a ray of hope to end the war in the Pacific. It offered a path to surrender insuring the continuity of the Japanese race. But it ended with a clear warning, "The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction."

Jack, under radio silence, knows nothing. His ship rolls port, his ship rolls starboard, cards are played, fights are broken up and he no longer notices the stink of man. He is ready to kill, he is ready to die. Morio does his morning weather reports, very few coded messages any more. There are few to receive them. He fears for his family, the bombers keep coming. The rain of death, keeps coming.

The Japanese military is incensed by the arrogance of the Potsdam Declaration and the Cabinet fully rejects the demands. They have a plan, 10,000 planes were being prepared as Kamikaze aircraft, food water and tons of ammunition were stored in caves, 3 million soldiers to be deployed, 32 million citizens will muster in defense

of their homeland. Children are trained to become suicide bombers, strapping explosives around their torsos and rolling under the treads of the American tanks. Grandmothers are taught to stick a man with a poisoned spear. The plan was to swarm the troop carriers, lose 50 planes but kill 5,000 Americans on a troop ship – maximize losses to the enemy! Sink the troop ships, lots of troop ships! Jack is their target before he can even raise a rifle. Sink troop carriers, kill as many Americans as you can, horrify the American public at the civilian losses and then negotiate peace without a surrender. If undefended civilians die waiting, it is their duty. Better that millions die than we ever bow our heads. Better to die than surrender! Morio was ready to be sacrificed for the honor of Japan.

Two great wills stand face to face, neither ready to back down. Both ready to send a million souls to their deaths to see this to the end.

August 6th, 1945, 8:20 AM, Tokyo time. The morning report from the Imperial Army terminal in Hiroshima to Army Headquarters goes silent. All communication with Hiroshima just stops. Morio goes home in Tokyo after his early morning shift, having no idea a city is gone. Jack, under radio silence, knows nothing. The Captain is under orders, silence it will be. His ship rolls port, his ship rolls starboard, cards are played, fights are broken up and no longer notices the stink of man. He is ready to kill, he is ready to die. At that same moment it is 9:20 PM, August 5th on the USS Augusta, steaming west with President Truman heading home from Europe. He eagerly awaits word – devastation or dud? Shortly before noon the next day, seated at lunch with a group of sailors he receives his answer – devastation. Pre-approved announcements are made.

The destruction was so complete, it took the Japanese a while to understand its magnitude. Truman warned: “If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on earth.”

The broadcast of the President is heard before most of Japan understands. The destruction was so complete that clarity on the part of the Japanese was not reached until August 7 when the Vice Chief of the Imperial Army General staff explained: “The whole city of Hiroshima was destroyed instantly by a single bomb.” But in Japan you do your duty! Morio’s wife and children stay in Tokyo. To leave Tokyo, to break routine, even to protect your family is to admit defeat; that is treason in Japan. Life goes on as normal, but it is not. The world has just changed. The USS Augusta steams on.

Morio returns to work to give his early morning reports, Jack moves slowly east, the war rages on, two great wills face one another. Can hope rise from this horrible bomb, headlines fill western newspapers, Japan stays silent. Morio has lived through the firebombing of Tokyo, could this be worse? He reads the reports in the Japanese news agency, this is worse. He reads of a woman petrified of these giant lizards crawling into her home only to find they are the hairless, naked charred bodies of victims of the blast dying a miserable death. He prays his children are vaporized, spared this anguish. He prays his city of 3,000,000 will die without suffering. Morio does his morning weather reports, no coded messages. He knows an end is near. He knows his end may be near.

Jack steams west, his ship rolls port, his ship rolls starboard, he reads in his bunk. He no longer smells the stench of man. 5,000 men stuck below in a storm took care of that. After the fire buckets filled with vomit, your helmet was all you had left. Older marines had told him he would know when a situation is truly FUBAR! 5,000 men vomiting in a closed, hot space – that is FUBAR. He is ready to kill, he is ready to die. His war rolls on. President Truman explores what it will take to completely vanquish Japan, his military advisors tell him 15 atomic bombs. We have two, used one. We can build 13 more if we need to. Several advisors think two will be enough. One to show the power, the second to show we can make more. What will it take to break the will of Japan?

From Japan, silence.

August 9th, 3:00 AM, Tokyo. A second B-29 lifts off from the tiny island of Tinian, just 39 square miles of land in the Northern Mariana Islands headed for their primary target, the city of Kokura. It is home to what U.S. military planners called “one of the largest arsenals in Japan.” As the plane flies, Morio prepares his morning weather reports in Tokyo. Jack spends another sunrise on deck. It is afternoon the day before in Washington, President Truman enjoys a late lunch after signing the United Nations Charter. The day drags on, dinner is served at the Whitehouse, the president plans to retire with his favorite Bourbon, a movie with Bess and then onto bed. Hirohito enjoys his breakfast, a walk in the Imperial Gardens with his favorite poetry. Morio heads home after his 7:00 AM broadcast, will his city of millions disappear today? Jack, heads back to the deck after lunch. He keeps his life vest on, never can be too sure. The B-29 flies on. Kokura is shrouded in fog and smoke, a secondary target must be used. The skies are clear over Nagasaki, course corrections are made.

August 9th, 11:00 AM, Tokyo. President Truman has retired for the evening in Washington. The Japanese Supreme War Council sits down to discuss their stance on the Potsdam Declaration. As the men begin a heated debate over the future course of the war, another 40,000 lives are snuffed out. The argument rages on. There cannot be unconditional surrender, there must be conditions. Tempers flare, absolute demands are made, postures are maintained as more death rains down upon them. News of the second city’s destruction arrives while the argument rolls on, nothing changes. One side believes in accepting surrender with one condition, preserve the Emperor, and put an end to the war before any more atomic bombs are dropped. The other side believes the war should be continued. All the military leaders, fully admitting that ultimate victory can never be won, believe they can inflict considerable damage to the enemy during the invasion. That would break the enemy’s moral and force it to end the war on favorable terms to Japan. Millions of lives lost to save the disgrace of surrender, a worthy exchange. They believe the people will rally with them. They all understand that multiple conditions will never be accepted, but no consensus can be reached – one condition

or many. The meeting breaks up at 1:00 PM, Tokyo time. The Supreme War Council is at an impasse. Jack sleeps on the deck, clueless he is their primary target. Morio enjoys time with the family, trying to show courage in front of his children.

As news spreads in the Japanese ranks, radical junior officers denounce any acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, even with conditions. The officers plot. The ministers favoring peace push to accept the Potsdam Declaration with only the condition to keep their Emperor. The ministers plot.

Two formidable wills: **One to save the Japanese people at the expense of face, the other to save face at the expense of the Japanese people.**

President Truman, sleeps soundly in Washington, Hirohito sips tea; death rains. Morio sits in a daze, another city gone, at any second he, his family, his beloved Tokyo could vanish – he sits numb. He ponders if he will see a flash before it dies. Jack, continues west, scuttle has it he is getting near the end of his voyage, some sort of bomb has been dropped, blew up a whole city. Will the Japs quit? He sits on the bow of his transport waiting for dinner, ready to die for his country.

August 9th, 11:50 PM, Tokyo. An Imperial Conference with the Emperor is called to break the stalemate. For the next three hours intense meetings bring it to the Emperor to decide. Hirohito calls for peace, the Potsdam Declaration terms will be accepted. Hirohito declares one must “bear the unbearable” to save the Japanese race. He moves to save his people and save the Imperial House. As the Imperial Council debates the future of their nation, President Truman comes to terms with the gravity of his decisions. Truman too was getting pressured from two different camps. Those who felt the desire to crush the brutal enemy encouraged the President to use more atomic bombs “to finish the job immediately” as one senator put it. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America expressed its deep disturbance at the use of the atomic bombs and urged patience before more

indiscriminate destruction occurred. The President meets with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, General Groves of the Manhattan Project and other Cabinet leaders and emerges with a simple order: “There will be no more Atomic Bombs dropped without his authorization. The jubilation felt with the success of the first bomb faded into the reality of over 100,000 innocents dead or dying. He did not like the idea of “killing all these kids”, it was a heavy burden to bear. At the same moment in time, in the same hour, a world away, two leaders were coming to terms with having to “bear the unbearable”. One leader strove to end the rain of death on his people, the other leader prayed there would be no need to send it. Each felt a powerful force to end it, each felt a powerful force to see it to the brutal end. Early that morning, Morio prepares his morning news and weather forecasts, numb in his duties, he knows he could be evaporated at any second. Jack trudges to the deck for the morning torpedo drill. Is today his day to die? They are close to his destination, he can feel it. The war wages on. 1.5 Million men are converging on the western pacific. Some ahead of Jack, some behind. All targets, ready to be killed to save face in Japan.

August 11, 1945, a day of confusion in Tokyo. The Tokyo morning papers lead with two main articles. One outlining how the government had decided to capitulate and the people should be prepared to weather the difficulties in order to preserve the Emperor. The other a forceful proclamation urging soldiers and officer to continue fighting, “We must fight on until we win the sacred war to preserve our national polity. Even if we have to eat grass, chew dirt, and sleep in the field.” It goes on to tell every Japanese citizen to die seven times to preserve their honor. Junior offices in the Japanese army met and set out a plan for a coup. It was simple: Occupy the Royal Palace to “protect” the Emperor from the horrible outside influences, arrest or kill the senior statesmen that had moved to accept this unthinkable surrender, place Tokyo under martial law and seize the radio stations to rally Japan to die with their Emperor in the defense of their homeland. The newspaper article urging their troops to fight on was the Army’s first salvo in the attempt to undermine peace. The citizens of Japan would be spared the humiliation of surrender and have the glory in death! It is clearly the right path – in the eyes of the military. Morio reads the paper, hopes it will end

with his family still alive. Jack's ship steams west, kamikazes wait patiently in secret to destroy it. The war trudges on.

Those in Japan pushing for peace see their first potential tipping point is reached and one false move may tip the balance and move them back to the deadly path of continuing the war, more atomic bombs and the end of Japan. Somehow the American's had to be notified before they learned of the morning papers. The army controlled the airwaves, they were stuck. But those driving for peace had a plan too. Through a small News outlet, that had older and uncontrolled equipment, they surreptitiously send the message through Morse code, hoping the American military sees their message before they read the proclamation in the media for the Japanese soldier to fight on. There must be no more atomic bombs! The message was picked up by the U.S. radio monitors. Japan would surrender with one condition, the Emperor would be remain with "Imperial Prerogatives". Those sending the message ignored the impasse at the Imperial War Council and left one condition, their Emperor would remain. The day ends in Japan, the day begins in Washington. Now Tokyo waits in silence. Newspapers around the globe announce a conditional surrender moving all eyes to Washington, but the war goes on. Bombers are loaded, death rains upon the cities of Japan and Operation Downfall continues. 1.5 Million Men are converging on the Western Pacific, ready to destroy the enemy. Morio only sees two futures, complete death or surrender. He hopes for surrender – but never out loud.

August 12th, 2:00 AM, Tokyo. An official answer is received – rejected, with conditions. Morio prepares for his morning announcements, Jack trudges to the deck to see if he lives another day, President Truman finishes lunch and plans the afternoon off waiting for a response, Hirohito sleeps in his palace. Now Washington waits, the war rages on. Men die while councils sleep.

August 12, 5:30 AM, Tokyo. Morio makes his hourly news and weather forecasts, Jack heads below for morning chow, no torpedo again today. President Truman

enjoys a Bourbon and water in the Whitehouse. He does not expect a quick reply, the Japanese do not make quick replies. Translations in Tokyo are complete, the terms are clear “the emperor and the Japanese government shall be subject to the Allied supreme commander” and “the ultimate form of the Japanese government shall be determined by the will of the Japanese people”. The Military rejected this out of hand, it violated all their sacred perceptions. Radical young staff officers plan their coup: “protect” the Emperor, kill the misguided senior statesmen, seize the radio stations and rally Japan in the defense of their homeland.

The diminished role of the Emperor is unthinkable. A new stalemate begins. As the two sides of the Japanese position, posture and challenge, President Truman takes a restful Sunday in the office waiting for a reply. A reply that never comes. The war rages on, while Japanese leaders posture, 1,000 American bombers continued to attack Japanese cities killing another 15,000. The next Atomic bomb would be ready on August 19th, the President hoped he would not have to use it but he is firm in his resolve. Two more cities were selected, back to Kokura and then Niigata if a surrender does not appear.

The hours pass, more silence.

August 14th, 5:30 AM, Tokyo. Morio prepares his broadcasts, hoping the bombing will end soon. Jack waits on the deck for an all clear. President Truman and his advisors are getting impatient, it is now late in the day on August 13th in Washington. Two days have past, still no word. A consensus is brewing to take Potsdam off the table. Seven more Atomic bombs will be available over the next 60 days, the military is ready to use them for enough Americans have died. Patience prevails, the war will continue and ultimatums will wait, evening spreads across the U.S. Truman has a Bourbon to relax, ponders what it will take to stop the endless death. As Hirohito rises, emergency meetings are called in Tokyo. A quiet man will be quiet no more.

Two leaders walk a tightrope: 97% of the American people want Hirohito executed, exiled or imprisoned. They wish Japan crushed. Truman feels the will of the American people, but wants the trail of death to end. Will millions of Japanese die to preserve their emperor? Can't they know he would die if they take this path? Truman walks a tightrope.

Hirohito knows if the war continues, the Japanese race may come to an end, his house will fall and many more will die. He will die. His military may not accept what he will order. In their world, it is better for him to die, it is better for their country to die, than surrender. His military cannot see that the only way to preserve the Emperor is to surrender the Emperor. Hirohito, walks a tightrope. Jack and Morio plod on, hoping to see another sunrise.

August 14th, 10:00 AM, Tokyo. Morio sat anxiously at home after a long night, rumors were running wild. Would we have peace, will there be more war, everyone in the broadcast ministry is afraid of the military. Would they accept surrender, or would we all die for their honor. Jack was having lunch aboard the USS General George Randall. He has traveled half way around the world. Jack new he was close to the end of the voyage. Lots of scuttle on landing, lots of scuttle of bombs and hints of peace. He ponders "Will these fuckers quit or will I have to die killing them?" From what he knew, the fuckers would not quit, he would die killing them. At that same moment, is 9:00 PM in Washington, Truman has finished a long day with his last meeting General Sutherland in the afternoon. He waits for an answer, he hopes it comes soon.

Hirohito has summoned leaders of Japan to the palace immediately, no delay, it is now! They sit in silence until 10:50 AM, Hirohito enters in full uniform and white gloves. Summaries were presented, it appeared another long discussion would ensue but it did not. Tradition is broken and all sides were not heard, Hirohito is very clear. The war cannot continue, western papers had clarified the contents of the American reply. He felt they were approaching the one condition with "favorable intentions" and he would accept them. To save the Japanese people and

nation, the military would have to lay down their arms, accept occupation, bear the unbearable, tolerate the intolerable and strive for the reconstruction of their nation. He knew that, because the people and officers had no idea of their intentions, he would have to announce his decision on the radio so all of Japan would know it to be truth. The military demanded two days, Hirohito knew better. He did not trust them. It will be recorded today and presented tomorrow.

Officers were informed, a message was to be drafted and agreed upon. The wheels for the end of the war were set into motion. The wheels for the coup were set into motion. Jack and Morio plod on, praying to see another sunrise.

By midday in Tokyo, a draft of the speech was being circulated for approval and signature of all the leading ministers and military leaders. Typical to the Japanese culture, the revisions were slow, considered, revisited, reconsidered, discussed and pondered. As Truman slept, words were discussed and intents were refined. At 6:00 AM in Washington, as the President's day was about to start, it was 7:00 PM in Tokyo, a final redraft was approved. Only to be followed by the painfully slow process of having it rescripted in traditional brush and ink. The war dragged on, death continued while the surrender was made "appropriate" for final signing. Morio sleeps, his day will start soon enough. Jack sleeps, his day will come soon enough. Jack no longer notices the snoring or stench. President Truman starts his day, a shot of bourbon with breakfast is the story, he prepares executive orders to end the war. He prays he gets to deliver them soon. He has a 10 appointments before lunch, he keeps his afternoon clear, he hopes for the need to call a press conference and a celebration to follow. Jack and Morio plod on, hoping to see another sunrise.

August 14th, 11:00 PM, Tokyo. 12 hours after Hirohito had made the decision to end the war, a proper signed copy was ready and approved by all. Instantly, a telegram is transmitted via the Swiss to the four Allied governments. The Emperor prepares to make a recording to be broadcast at noon the following day. Morio is

called in early, everyone at the radio station was there and in force. There was electricity in the air, the Emperor is making a recording and the war is to end. Morio is to tell the Japanese people in all his early morning broadcasts to listen to an important message from the Emperor at noon. It is their duty to listen. As the emperor makes his recording, the coup plotters gather just north of the Imperial Palace. By midnight, the recordings are made, hidden in a small safe off site, papers stacked in front of the safe and the area arranged to hide its presence while sinister rumors swirl.

As Hirohito retired after his long day, the radical officers start their move. It is now or never for the conspirators. Step #1, take the palace. The first step is to convince the commander of the Imperial Guards to secure the palace, “secure” the Emperor and protect him from those outside divergent influencers. The commander will not join, he was shot and killed, aids are beheaded, orders were forged and the mayhem begins.

August 15, 2:00 AM, Tokyo. The palace is taken – by their own guards under false orders. Communication is cut, the Emperor is protected and a search begins for the recording; it must be destroyed. The Tokyo newspapers receive two stories to publish immediately. One from the Prime Minister’s office with details of the rescript and end of the war. The other is an announcement that the Imperial Japanese Army is in revolt against the submissive and cowardly government who duped the Emperor to end the war. What do they publish? Which is safer to publish? Should they publish both? The editors realized they would be killed for publishing the wrong one so they elected to print two papers when the power came back on after the air raid. As soon as they knew who to believe, they would distribute the one and destroy the other. Their dilemma is Japan’s dilemma, are they at war or peace? Does death end or continue? Darkness shrouds Tokyo as the air raid continues, Morio waits for it to be over, there are no broadcasts during an air-raid. Another squad of bombers takes off for a daylight firebomb raid on Tokyo. They fly over countless ships heading west, preparing to invade Japan. The bombers expect to be over target by 8:30 AM, burn another section of Tokyo

to the ground. The sun shines brightly in Washington as the afternoon arrives and the crowds grow, expectation is in the air.

At the same moment, it is 1:00 PM in Washington, Truman sits down to lunch after a long morning of meetings. He ponders his discussion with Lord Balfour and the Jewish refugee problem. He will tend to it, after he hears from Japan. The cable is working its way across the globe. President Truman has a clear afternoon schedule, crowds continue to gather anticipating another announcement and he hopes to give them one. Morio prepares for his early morning news and weather forecasts. No coded messages, just a repeated reminder to listen at noon. Jack awaits his torpedo drill, ready for them to end. He is ready to make war. The cable is working its way to Washington, decoded and translated by the Swiss, then recoded to be sent to their Embassy taking hours, there are no computers in 1945.

August 15, 4:30 AM, Tokyo. The pursuit of the Imperial recording continued, the frustrated soldiers now knocking down doors and ransacking room after room in the labyrinth of Imperial Household Ministries. It is slow going. As various ministers and ranking personal return to the palace they are all arrested and put into a giant room. The ill-tempered search continues with no success. The mayhem continues while the Emperor sleeps.

Racing into Tokyo, a truck laden with wild-eyed soldiers and their co-conspirators head to kill those who influenced the Emperor. They will start with the Premier. They arrive to find he has been warned and has fled, the crazed conspirators burn his house to the ground. Then start looking for their next traitor, more mayhem follows, shootouts erupt.

The early morning quiet of the National Broadcasting is broken by the sound of boots as soldiers surround the building and charge in. The staff first is relaxed as they perceive it must be for their protection, until Morio and much of the staff are locked in a studio. The coup leaders confront the Assistant Director of Domestic

News, place a gun to his head and ask to make a broadcast. A broadcast proclaiming the war is to continue, we will fight to the end and declare the recording allegedly from the Emperor is a fake. Realizing that he is being asked, not ordered, the director talks him out of it while a member of the staff runs to get the head of Japanese Broadcasting only to find he is one of the ones locked up under the palace. The news director fully understands, if the army makes their broadcast, the future for Japan will be catastrophic! He explains that there can be no broadcasts during an air raid by order of the Eastern District Army and orders must be obeyed. In typical Japanese fashion, the coup leader obeys orders and steps aside for the air raid to end.

When the air-raid ends, Morio prepares for his morning broadcast only to go face to face with the armed coup leaders. He stares down the barrel of a renegade officer's gun. They demand to take the microphone. Morio is firm in his stance, he will not put the fanatical major on the air, the 5:00 AM news will be canceled and his own life rests on a precipice. The coup leader spent another hour intimidating the radio staff, Morio gun to his head, refused to back down. Finally a call came in from the commanders of the Eastern District Army, they are coming and the conspirators flee. Morio saw the script that was to be read, it started with "Our troops are now guarding the Imperial Palace..." He understood how close they came to disaster.

August 15th, 7:20 AM Tokyo. Jack sits on the deck, laden with life vest in brutal heat, waiting for Okinawa to appear on the horizon. Rumors swirl, do they prepare to fight and die or do they go home? He waits for orders. Morio, has recovered some composure from a pistol in his face to give the news, finely at 7:21 AM. He announces to the world "His Imperial Majesty the Emperor has issued a Rescript. It will be broadcast at noon today. Let us all respectfully listen to the voice of the Emperor." Within the Imperial Ministries, soldiers were still searching for the recordings with orders to find and destroy. It is 6:21 PM on the evening of August 14th in Washington DC, President Truman holds the official cable from the Swiss. The phone call of a couple of hours ago is now confirmed with official cable, Japan has surrendered on our terms. A press conference is called for 7:00 PM in

the Oval Office. Good bourbon will be served later tonight, lots of good bourbon. President Truman plans the evening to be a celebration, radical Japanese officers work feverishly with one last grasp to insure its not.

August 15th, 8:00 AM Tokyo, 7:00 PM, August 14th, Washington DC simultaneous moments in time. President Truman is about to start his 18th, and most important, press conference. The Imperial Guard, having no idea they were under false orders, march out of the palace at promptly 8:00 AM with their heads held high even though they did not find and destroy the Emperor's recording. A minister quietly hurries to release the men trapped in the palace and recover the recordings. Two recordings will be delivered, one to the main studio and one to a secret basement studio, at noon the Japanese people will hear their Emperor for the first time. If another coup is attempted, the secret studio can be used. The Eastern District Army now stands guard at the radio station, men with guns are everywhere. Morio tidies up his desk to finish his traumatic morning. He sits in his chair, numb, another air raid siren begins, bombers are 30 minutes out. Approaching Okinawa, the radio is connected to the loudspeakers on the USS General George Randall, 5142 men prepare to listen to their president. Hirohito calls his final meeting to cement the official end of the war before the noon broadcast. President Truman reads a short statement that Japan has surrendered on our terms, he ends it with simple "That is all." The room applauds, 20 minutes out from Tokyo, the bombers are recalled. There will be no firebombs today. As they turn away the air raid sirens stop for the last time. There is quiet in Tokyo, the American President has called an end to this death. In the Japanese Broadcasting Company they sit in silence as the translator finishes. Shouts, screams and wild dances erupt on the deck of the crowded troop carrier. Times Square becomes one giant party, San Francisco turns into a virtual riot and the nation celebrates.

Two men who will never meet, once a world apart, Morio Tateno and Jack Fuller, now stand and gaze into the same warm Pacific sun of an August morning. Tears run down their faces, smiles emerge bathed in joy, uncontrolled sobs flow forth from a relief to great to restrain, they together proclaim for the world to hear "I get to live!"

Epilogue:

Jack Fuller our character, is based on a neighbor and interviews with WWII veterans. My neighbor came home having been part of Operation Downfall but he never invaded Japan. He has three children, seven grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. He lives today having screamed “I get to live” from the deck of a troop transport on a steamy Pacific morning in August, 1945. How many Americans live today, thanks to 1.5 million men coming home?

Morio Tateno continued his career in Radio, raised his family in Tokyo and was the subject of many articles on “coded messages” in radio over the years to come. His colleague who had the gun in his face just earlier in the morning went on to write a number of books on the use of radio in war propaganda. Sadly, all the domestically available copies are in Japanese so I have no idea of his insights.

The two “crazed officers”, one who put the gun to the head of the radio personal and the other that burned down the Premier’s house and shot up several others both committed suicide shortly before the Emperor’s broadcast.

Most of our history books paint a simple picture of the end of WWII. We dropped two bombs, Japan surrendered and we moved on. The inner workings of Japan were far more complicated and we came brutally close to having to bomb more cities to put an end to the war. It is unknown if the Military had taken control that day, what it may have taken to end the war. What would President Truman have done with a surrender note in one hand and a translated radio broadcast announcing a military takeover in the other?

In April of 1945, we had started Operation Starvation. It was an American naval mining operation in which vital water routes and ports of Japan were mined in

order to disrupt enemy shipping. The transport of basic food and other supplies came to a virtual halt. The country was on the verge of starvation. Operation Downfall would most likely been delayed to “starve them out” and the winter would have done the dirty work for us. 100s of thousands or even millions would have starved to death and/or died in future bombings. The human toll would have been catastrophic. The honor the military strove to live for, would have been a disaster.

We will never know how many lives might have been lost in operation downfall or in the starvation of winter. We do know that the bravery of an assistant news director, Yasou Yanangisawa, and news anchor, Morio Tateno, stopped the key component to the potential coup that may have resulted in the death of millions. Virtually lost to history, two men demonstrating extraordinary bravery so on one hot August Morning in 1945 millions of souls may look to the sun and proclaim “I get to live”.